

**Intellectual Mutuality**  
**Access to Japanese Databases**  
presented by Dr. Kenneth B. Pyle

The US CULCON panel members strongly believe that a sustained effort by CULCON to address the topic of "intellectual mutuality" would be beneficial to both countries. Such an effort would first define the nature, existence and accessibility of institutions in the intellectual life of each nation, and then address barriers to such institutions where barriers clearly exist and hinder the development of mutual understanding and friendship. The panel members argue that such institutions and access to them are central to the tone of economic, political and technical relations between Japan and the United States. The policy choices that the United States makes concerning Japan are directly affected by the quantity and quality of information available, whether it be interpretations of Japanese history, of its social institutions, of trade and investment data, or of the on-going developments of Japanese political life. Can the same be any less true of Japanese policy choices concerning the United States? The creation of a program to study the United States exclusively at the Japanese Institute for International Affairs indicates the same concern among Japanese policy makers. Thus, the US CULCON panel members argue, it is the responsibility, and must be a high priority, of those who deal with the public domain to remove barriers in each country to access to intellectual activity of every sort. There must be, they argue, true parity and mutuality in this arena for good policy to be made.

The topic of "intellectual mutuality" that we are proposing covers a broad array of possible subjects. For the purposes of CULCON plenary discussion, the US CULCON panel proposes to group them in two categories as follows: accessibility of databases, of government information, and of media sources; secondly, university cultures, including such subjects as hiring and tenure practices, and student exchanges.

The US CULCON panel members argue, for example, that expert attention needs to be given to issues of access to Japanese government information, helping explore the definitions of the public domain and of information in it, and of the limits of access to it. Attention should be given to policies regulating public information and its access in the two countries, and the rationales for such policies.

Another subject area that has had high profile in the recent past is access to media sources in Japan. The exclusive system of press clubs has only last year been opened to allow foreign membership. This is a topic that CULCON's media working group discussed at its meeting in Tokyo in May; both sides agreed to support efforts to increase access by the foreign press to significant media sources in Japan, and we have already heard a report on this topic from our media working group.

Concerning universities in the two countries, the US CULCON panel members argue that a full discussion would cover such subjects as the tenure system in Japan that excludes most non-Japanese, a dearth of foreign faculty, and the problems relating to student exchange.

Considering the many options discussed above, then, the US CULCON panel members conclude that many Americans would benefit greatly from better access to the institutions that shape Japan's intellectual activities, and that such access would also work greatly in the self-interest of these Japanese institutions. They deem that there is a critical mutuality of interest in this issue.

We believe that of the specific subject areas mentioned above, the subject of Japanese databases would afford the best starting point for CULCON activities. Access to Japanese databases would have a direct impact on the quantity and quality of intellectual exchange between the two countries. On this subject there are unknowns of such fundamental nature as the scope and number of Japanese databases. Are there

problems of access, and if so, are they due to lack of demand, technical problems, cost and/or copyright? One of the first opportunities for US experts to share information on some of the technical problems involved in accessing Japanese databases was a one-day seminar in March, 1994 co-sponsored by the Library of Congress and the Japan Information Access Project. This was an effort to begin to frame the problems and solutions associated with accessing Japanese databases on a fairly concrete level. In an separate effort, the Association of Research Libraries, with support from the National Coordinating Committee on Japanese Library Resources and the Commission, is currently planning several pilot projects to test a variety of solutions for scholarly access to Japanese databases in conjunction with Japanese librarians at selected US university libraries.

Dr. Stephen Anderson of the Center for Global Communications (an institute of International University of Japan) writes that the growth of overseas access to Japanese databases is hindered by " . . . Japanese language, system standards, domestic focus, service costs, transmission methods, staff personnel, kanji mode input and various other difficulties."<sup>1</sup> He adds that barriers fall more into the realms of organization and coordination than of technical problems, although the latter remain. Dr. Anderson believes that a high priority should be placed on " . . . the unfettered access to Japanese organizations through Internet and other means of electronic information connections."<sup>2</sup>

For the purposes of opening a joint effort with their Japanese counterparts to address the many issues at hand, then, my panelists and I propose that a working group be created to address the subject of Japanese databases, a topic for which an action agenda is already at hand. The research paper by Dr. Anderson presents several desirable and

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson, Stephen J. *Databases in Japan: Business, Government, and Overseas Access from North America*. University of Virginia, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

feasible ways of improving access to databases between the two countries. We hope it will open a larger discussion of the mutual benefits to be derived from enhanced access to the institutions that form the intellectual fabric of our two countries.

In reviewing the relevant literature and consulting with experts in the field, US CULCON panel members have formed the impression, based on anecdote with some documentation, that considerable attention in the United States is now being paid to the availability of and access to Japanese scientific and technological data at least. For example, in the US government alone, there are 26 agencies collecting data on science and technology and coordinating their efforts through the Japan Technology Program in the US Department of Commerce. Interesting to note, in recent workshops on this subject sponsored by the National Research Council, as much attention and discussion were devoted to the level of demand for such information on the part of US consumers as on the level of availability and access to it in Japan. The situation concerning data in Japan on trade and economic issues, or on security, political and social trends is less clear. Demand for such data by US consumers appears to be growing, far outstripping either the availability of data or access to it where available. There is, however, less systematic assessment of the situation than for scientific and technological data as noted above. Also, the US CULCON panel members do not have corresponding information on Japanese demand for such data or on Japanese views of its availability or accessibility.

General and specific aspects of many of the individual subjects of interest to the US CULCON panel have received attention lately in the form of workshops, conferences and research projects in Japan and in the United States. Of particular interest are two research projects funded respectively by the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership and by the Japan-US Friendship Commission, which clearly demonstrate the need for greater availability and openness of information and data to help push forward high quality research in the interest of improving bilateral relations. The first project,

funded by the Center for Global Partnership, is the Documentation Project on US-Japan Relations at the National Security Archive in Washington, DC. This aims to identify, declassify and analyze a substantial number of government documents in both countries pertaining to US-Japan relations since 1960, with the purpose of building a more accurate history of the formation and development of the current state of the relationship. Under Freedom of Information Act procedures of the US government, the binational research team has identified and successfully declassified a number of valuable US government documents but continues to face difficulties in identifying, locating and accessing Japanese diplomatic, defense and economic records relevant to the project. Without the opportunity to examine such records, the researchers will not be able to craft a balanced history of postwar relations.

The second project was a Commission-funded workshop at MIT in May, 1994, at which a binational research panel assessed the general topic of "intellectual access" in Japan, as the title of the workshop indicated. The participants' aim was to define the outlines of what information is available and what records and data can and cannot be examined in the public domain in Japan, as well as assess the degree to which the field of expertise of each participant was open to outside contact and influence. "Outside" here did not indicate "non-Japanese"; rather, it indicated extra-institutional contact, Japanese or foreign. The record of the proceedings indicates that early on in the workshop the participants struggled to define "public domain" in Japan. The effort to define it, and the consequences for research of the ambiguity of a definition of the public domain, continued to inform the workshop discussion over two days. I will discuss these projects in more detail later in this paper.

Both these projects are instructive of the difficulties we uncover when assessing the quantity and quality of intellectual exchange between the two countries. Both anecdotal and systematic evidence abounds. Studies of student flows, a CULCON priority, have already measured the problems specific to that subject. The CULCON media working group has already raised the issue of "media access" in Japan as an area that deserves further attention. Studies of databases have already recommended improvements in technological and financial barriers to better mutual accessibility. The arena of printed material has reached a well-publicized crisis, in that the numbers and costs of printed materials in Japan necessary to keep current of research in Japan are now beyond the capacity of the United States to acquire. In each of these specific subjects, improvements are being considered and in some cases implemented -- some under CULCON auspices, others independently. Beyond these concrete problems and solutions, moreover, looms the more difficult problem of defining the institutions and institutional arrangements that create the intellectual fabric of our two countries in order to match them up and assess the state of access and openness between them. Clearly, these are complex issues.